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# SYMPOSIUM—POVERTY AND PARENTAL DEPENDENCE IN RELATION TO CHILD LABOR REFORM

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## I.—SCHOLARSHIPS

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BY GEORGE A. HALL,  
Secretary, New York Child Labor Committee.

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The plan of granting children child labor or school scholarships is no longer new. With various modifications it has been tried in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Louisville and several other cities. In some places these scholarships are administered as a part of the work of the regular relief societies, while in others child labor committees, consumers' leagues, or some similar organization, not doing relief society work, give these scholarships. Whether or not it is more appropriate for a relief society or some other organization to administer them, is outside the purpose of this discussion. In New York City a satisfactory arrangement has been followed since 1905, under which the appropriate relief society furnishes the necessary aid (not always under the name of scholarships) when the children are under fourteen years of age, and the New York Child Labor Committee grants its scholarships to certain fourteen and fifteen-year-old children unable to meet the legal requirements for securing working papers.

When first established, scholarships had a two-fold purpose: (1) to furnish an answer to the opposition which usually develops in child labor legislative campaigns, which claims that the passage of the given bill will drive scores of poor widows to the poorhouse; and (2) to aid in securing a strict and impartial enforcement of the law, particularly new provisions. The value of the New York Child Labor Committee's scholarships has been most apparent in relation to the second purpose. While in the beginning it was thought the granting of these scholarships would continue only until the community had adjusted itself to certain new laws, experience has proved that improvement in the efficiency of law enforcement brings with it the same allegation that much hardship

to certain families will result. For this reason, the Committee is continuing its scholarships, and at present, at least, sees no prospect of abandoning this part of its work.

### *State Aid*

Some, no doubt, will argue that inasmuch as the state has passed compulsory school attendance laws, it should by public aid make it possible for children of families in destitute circumstances to attend school. This view is held by many prominent educators and social workers. Three states, Ohio, Oklahoma and Michigan, following the example set by Switzerland and other foreign countries, have adopted a plan of granting state aid in such cases. Much may be said in favor of state aid; on the other hand grave dangers confront the state which attempts this work. Until feasibility of furnishing such relief by the state has been more clearly demonstrated in our own country, the plan of meeting this problem as adequately as possible through private relief will undoubtedly continue.

### *Administration*

In considering the administration of these scholarships by a private organization, certain features essential to the success of the plan may be pointed out.

#### 1. Preliminary Investigation:

Before making a decision as to the need of assistance, a thorough investigation should be made by a person experienced in this line of work. This should include several visits to the home, calls at the school the child attends or has last attended, and inquiries of other persons able to give information as to the financial condition of the family.

#### 2. Careful Record-Keeping:

Written records of all visits and statements secured should be preserved.

#### 3. Reports as to School Attendance:

As a prerequisite to receiving the weekly allowance, every child should be required to present a report card signed by the proper school authority, showing the actual attendance of that child during that particular week. It is also very desirable that similar cards

showing school attendance of the younger brothers and sisters of the scholarship holder should be secured. The placing of emphasis in this way upon the attendance of younger children will aid in obviating the need of granting scholarships when such children reach the age for leaving school.

4. Personal Application of Scholarship Holder for Allowance:

While the experience of some may be in favor of sending the money weekly to the home of the child, the practice in New York, of requiring each child to call at the office personally on Saturdays presenting at that time the school report card, seems to us preferable. It affords more personal touch with each child and also assures one that the child is not working on Saturdays.

Five years' experience in granting scholarships in New York has proved that they are of peculiar value, not only as a means of affording relief to needy families, but more especially as a source of information otherwise not securable as to the actual way in which the school officials and the Labor Department inspectors enforce the laws for which they are responsible.